

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics occurs where one or more provisions of the Code were not followed in situations where an exemption or exception had not been approved by the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment, as required in paragraph (xii) of the Code's preamble. Rules on PRA to statistics are covered in the relevant PRA to Official Statistics Orders; the Code applies as if it includes these orders.

1 Background Information

Name of Statistical Output (including web link if relevant)

[Work Programme](#), August 2012 first release

Name of Producer Organisation

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Name and contact details of person submitting this report, and date of report

David Frazer, Head of Profession (HoP) for Statistics, DWP
david.frazer@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
0191 21 66664

7 September 2012

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, Practice 7 – limit access before public release to those people essential for production and publication, and for quality assurance and operational purposes.

Protocol 2, Practice 8 - ensure that no indication of the substance of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access before publication.

Date of occurrence

7 August 2012

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

The day before release, the statistics in their final form were sent to officials on the Pre-Release Access (PRA) list, requesting contributions to improve the commentary

on the statistics. One recipient of PRA forwarded a narrative assessment of the statistics to two analysts for comment. This was seeking to add context to the pattern in the time series for job referrals. These analysts were not on the PRA list, and nor were they classed as part of the quality assurance team. Although no statistics were forwarded, the e-mail described the trend in the time series of the statistics.

The statisticians responsible contacted all officials concerned to make them aware of the breach and informed all of those in the email chain not to reply to or forward on the information.

Reasons for breach

There is no reason to believe that this was anything other than a mistake by the official concerned, who was seeking to improve the quality of the statistical release and was unaware that the analysts did not have PRA, nor that his words would be classed as revealing the content of a statistical release, according to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

3 Reactions and Impact

When the statisticians involved in producing the report saw the e-mails, they informed the HoP that a breach had taken place. They also contacted the officials who had sent the e-mails, informing them that their actions had caused a breach, and reminding them of their responsibilities under the Code, given their privileged access.

There was no adverse impact, as the information was not used in advance of its official release.

4 Corrective Actions Taken (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

As stated above, all officials who transmitted or received the restricted submission have been informed of the breach and reminded of the need to limit PRA.

The HoP wrote to all senior policy leads and departmental lead analysts to explain the context and obligations behind PRA arrangements, and detailing the possible consequences of failing to adhere to the requirements. The departmental executive team have discussed the issue and have reiterated the seriousness of any breaches of the Code.

Departmental statisticians have established more formal, closer working relationships with the Press Office and will also be running seminars with more junior policy officials and press officers to educate non-Statisticians on the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

A member of the analysis team in question has been added to the quality assurance

list to enable future releases in the series to benefit from their expertise and to provide fuller context to and commentary on the statistics. This official will not need PRA.

The PRA lists for all DWP statistics have been audited and revised, as necessary, to ensure that the most useful eligible officials receive PRA.

We have also amended the text that accompanies all pre-release statistics, to strengthen the message that the statistics should not be forwarded or discussed with those who have not been granted PRA.

5 Any other relevant supporting material (including link to published statements about this breach)

A copy of this breach report will be published in the relevant areas of the Authority website and referenced from DWPs website.